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(1) Ambassador Schieffer hopes for increased defense spending

NIKKEI NET (Full)  
14:03, May 20, 2008

U.S. Ambassador to Japan J. Thomas Schieffer earlier today delivered a speech at the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan in Tokyo. In it, the ambassador expressed his hope that Japan would boost its defense spending, saying, "Japan should consider the advantage of increasing its defense spending." The ambassador emphasized that while neighboring countries, such as China, South Korea, and Russia, have considerably increased their military budgets, Japan's alone has not changed its defense spending for the past decade.

The ambassador also said: "It is troubling that the ratio of Japan's defense spending to its GDP has been dropping gradually." Regarding the selection of the next-generation combat aircraft for the Air Self-Defense Force, the ambassador noted: "It is important for the United States and Japan to consider jointly, rather than separately, a procurement strategy for the aircraft."

(2) Yokosuka rape incident involving U.S. service member; MOD to pay 3 million yen solatium to Australian women as consolatory measure

RYUKYU SHIMPO (Page 23) (Full)  
May 20, 2008

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Tokyo

In 2002, an Australian woman named Jane (not real name) was sexually assaulted by a U.S. serviceman attached to the Yokosuka Naval Base in Kanagawa Prefecture. She subsequently filed a lawsuit against him, and the court ordered him to pay 3 million to her in compensation for his act. But she has not been able to collect the money because he fled to the United States. The Ministry of Defense decided yesterday to pay a 3 million yen solatium to the woman as a consolatory measure. This is the first case for the Japanese government to pay a solatium to a victim of sexual violence by a U.S. service member.

Government's decision first case in Japan; Woman criticizes fled U.S. sailor

The U.S. sailor who allegedly raped the woman has since returned to the United States and left the U.S. Navy. The government's rare step is said to be based on a 1964 cabinet decision that says: "The Japanese government is allowed to provide relief to victims who were not provided such by the U.S. government."

Jane attended the Okinawa prefectural rally against incidents and accidents caused by U.S. military personnel, held in the town of Chatan on March 23, and spoke on the stage about her suffering from being raped by the U.S. sailor.

Jane was raped in April 2002 by a crewmember of the USS Kitty Hawk. In July 2002, the Yokosuka District Court dismissed the case without clarifying the reason. A preliminary examination held in October also decided that a court-martial was not needed. Jane then filed criminal charges against the U.S. sailor, and the Tokyo District Court in November 2004 ordered him to pay 3 million yen in compensation.

But during the trial, the U.S. sailor retired from the Navy and returned to the United States. He has not paid the compensation.

To deal with such a situation, Article 18-6 of the Japan-U.S. Status of Forces Agreement stipulates that in the event a member of the United States armed forces is unable to pay for an incident or accident committed outside the performance of official duty, "the U.S. government shall pay compensation in place of the U.S. service

member."

This time around, the U.S. government rejected the payment on the grounds of the statute of limitations, saying, "Under U.S. law (Foreign Claims Act), compensation can be paid within two years of the date of loss." The compensation to Jane has been in limbo.

The MOD explained its decision to pay the solatium this way: "Based on conventional wisdom, we have decided that people who are not protected by the law need relief measures." It is also the first case to pay a solatium regarding a case for which the two-year statute of limitations has expired.

Jane said: "Looking back at my six years of struggle, I am delighted with (the Japanese government's decision). It is strange that the perpetrator, who should pay (the compensation), has been leading a free life without being punished. The U.S. government has done nothing during this period. If they really want to stop sexual crimes, the United States should apologize to all victims. I will

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not give up until the perpetrator is found."

(3) Stop cluster bombs (Series 1) - Voices of world and Japan (Part 1): Interview with Lower House Speaker Yohei Kono: Expects Prime Minister Fukuda's leadership

MAINICHI (Page 9) (Full)

May 20, 2008

Interviewer Ken Uzuka

There is a growing interest at home and abroad in banning cluster bombs. The Mainichi Shimbun will report in five installments on expectations pinned by Japanese and other countries' leaders on the Dublin Diplomatic Conference on Cluster Munitions. Lower House Speaker Yohei Kono, representative of the Parliamentary Council to Promote a Ban on Cluster Bombs, was the first leading figure to be interviewed.

Cluster bombs became an issue because of the human harm they cause, but that did not lead to the movements to prohibit their use. With the start of the Oslo Process, however, discussion on cluster munitions began, and desperate efforts have been continuing to totally ban such weapons. Japan has participated in the existing Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), as well as the Oslo Process. Given this, Japan appears somewhat torn between these two systems.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs' (MOFA) thinking is that based on the joint defense of Japan with the United States, it is questionable whether such could function well if Japan alone participated in a ban on cluster bombs. The Ministry of Defense (MOD) insists that Japan must possess a comparable number of cluster bombs, insisting that there is nothing to worry about because Japan would use them in a prudent manner. But I wonder if doing so is really possible.

Humanitarian issues form a process leading to world peace. I think Japan should be more sensitive and brave to address this issue. Aside from a very limited number of exceptions, it is my belief that the correct course to follow is to head toward a total ban on cluster bombs.

Recalling the Convention on the Prohibition of Anti-Personnel Mines, I think then Foreign Minister Keizo Obuchi's decision (to join the convention) was highly significant. Even after he became prime minister, Mr. Obuchi enhanced Japan's international credibility for he was viewed as the leader who "decided to prohibit anti-personnel mines".

Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda has shown his diplomatic colors by attaching importance to neighboring countries and the rest of Asia, but should he decide to address the cluster munitions issue, Japan would be seen by other countries in the world as having changed. I also believe that Mr. Fukuda's diplomatic imprint would be further

recognized internationally. I pins my hopes on Prime Minister Fukuda. As the only nation that was the victim of atomic bombs, Japan should take the lead in resolving the cluster munitions issue. I hope to see Japanese diplomacy play a role. I also hope to see MOFA show its mettle that Japan can work to maintain peace through diplomacy.

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Since the (2001) terrorist attacks on the U.S., the use of force to put down resistance has spread across the world, but this has served only to heighten feelings of nationalism. This is my worry. When I was a child, I fled from bombs being dropped by American planes. Now that there no longer are lawmakers in the Diet who served at the front, those in my generation who know war must grapple with disarmament. In September, the Group of Eight House Speakers' Conference is to take place in Hiroshima City. Climate Change, as well as peace and disarmament are no doubt on the agenda for discussion at the conference. I believe the cluster bombs issue will also be a subject for discussion there.

(4) Stop cluster bombs (Series 1) - Voices of world and Japan (Part 4): Dublin Conference begins; Will an accord be reached on excepting latest bombs; Japan may be isolated

MAINICHI (Page 9) (Full)  
May 20, 2008

Katsumi Sawada, Dublin

The final-phase of the Oslo Process, disarmament negotiations aimed at concluding a ban on cluster bombs, whose unexploded bombs cause tremendous damage to citizens, opened in Dublin, Ireland, yesterday. Until recently the countries participating in the Oslo Process had been at odds over the question of a total ban on cluster bombs or a partial ban that allows the possession and use of some cluster bombs as exceptions. But there is now a growing possibility that agreement will be reached on excepting the latest cluster bombs, whose number is very limited and whose ratio of unexploded bombs is very low. This sort of agreement is viewed as being close to a total ban on cluster munitions. If this were realized, Japan, which insists on firmly keeping the cluster bombs it has held at present in spite of their high ratio of unexploded bombs, may be isolated internationally.

Joining the Dublin Conference are some 110 countries, including Japan, Britain, Germany, France, and Norway. The participating countries aim to agree to a draft agreement by May 30, when the conference is to close.

According to a diplomatic source, most participants have indicated that they will make concessions on a proposal close to a total ban. And most countries favoring a partial ban on cluster bombs have begun allowing latest bombs to be treated as exceptions. Those countries in favor of a total ban are also beginning to accept a proposal to except latest bombs.

Norway, a leading country calling for a total ban on cluster bombs, declared: "Should (latest bombs) not cause damage to civilians, it will be all right not to list them as bombs subject to a total ban." Participating countries are looking for common ground by excepting the latest bombs.

John Borrie, a researcher at the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research who is well versed on the Oslo Process, noted: "Most countries supportive of a partial ban are of the opinion that latest bombs will be treated as exceptions."

If differing views were not removed in the final stage of negotiations, it is expected that settlement will be reached by taking a vote in line with a two-third majority. Chances are strong

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that settlement will be reached by excepting the latest cluster

bombs in line with a majority of votes.

Japan, however, insists on firmly keeping the modified model of cluster bombs, which Japan has currently posses and whose ratio of unexploded bombs is reportedly to be 10 PERCENT or more in actual combat. A UN official in charge of disarmament made this comment: "Countries that may side with Japan's proposal would be only Finland or so. But the group favoring a partial ban and the group favoring a total ban are narrowing their gaps."

The possibility is not ruled out, however, that Japan may face a similar scene as it faced in the Oslo Conference in February 2007, when the Oslo Declaration aimed at creating a treaty was adopted without Japan making clear its attitude.

(5) Defense Ministry eyes senior posts for SDF brass

SANKEI (Page 2) (Abridged)  
May 16, 2008

The Defense Ministry is studying an institutional change so it can appoint uniformed officers in the Self-Defense Forces to bureau director general, division director, and other managerial posts in connection with the restructuring of its organization, sources said yesterday. This is aimed at readying the Defense Ministry's bureaucrats and the SDF's uniformed staff officers to advise the defense minister. An advisory panel for the government is expected to meet next week at the prime minister's office to discuss a reform of the Defense Ministry. On that occasion, Defense Minister Shigeru Ishiba will propose that institutional change as one of his ministry's multiple ideas. If it is approved at the panel meeting, the Defense Ministry will push ahead with its restructuring plan to establish an "operations bureau," which will be headed by an SDF officer, in an aim to unify SDF operations.

A reform promotion team, set up by Ishiba in the Defense Ministry, is studying the idea, which is aimed at changing the Defense Ministry and the SDF into an efficient organization. The Defense Ministry is currently divided into internal bureaus and four SDF staff offices. Ishiba has advocated reorganizing them into three functions for SDF operations planning, defense buildup, and Diet affairs and public relations. The reform team fleshed out this plan.

What remains a barrier to an overhaul of the Defense Ministry and the SDF is the government's current interpretation that precludes SDF personnel from the Defense Ministry's appointments to its posts above division director. This restriction to SDF personnel's appointments was established under the National Safety Agency Law. It was abolished after the National Safety Agency was changed to the Defense Agency. After that, however, the government took a similar view in its Diet replies. The government therefore will likely have to alter its interpretation and revise the Defense Ministry Establishment and relevant laws in order to appoint SDF personnel to managerial posts at the Defense Ministry.

As it stands, there is also an idea being floated for the case where an SDF officer cannot be appointed to a bureau director general post. In this case, an operations bureau is planned to be set up in the SDF Joint Staff Office, not as an internal bureau of the Defense Ministry, for unified SDF operations.

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(6) Finance Ministry points out at Fiscal Policy Council high cost of Japan's ODA: Seeking to check pressure for budgetary increase, it also says education budget is by no means inferior

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 9) (Full)  
May 20, 2008

The Finance Ministry on May 19 presented the results of a survey of the implementation of the official development assistance (ODA) budget to the Fiscal System Council reporting to the finance minister. The survey report pointed out the high cost of Japanese ODA's construction projects, citing that the cost of Japan's project

to construct one classroom in an elementary school in Tanzania was eight to 11 times higher than that of Britain.

According to data provided by the Finance Ministry, in a construction projects carried out in Tanzania from fiscal 2001 through fiscal 2002, Japan built 272 classrooms at the cost of approximately 1.24 billion yen -- approximately 5.57 million yen per classroom. In a similar project, Britain spent only 500,000 yen to 700,000 yen per classroom.

In a project to repair roads in Cambodia, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) spent 28 million yen to repair one kilometer of a two-lane road, while Japan spent 68 million yen, about 2.4 times the amount the ADB spent. An official in charge even pointed out that it might have been better off if they had built a road twice as longer as the existing one.

Regarding the education budget, the Finance Ministry submitted data to stress that Japan's budget level is by no means inferior to the levels of other leading countries. The Finance Ministry made that comment for a rebuttal to Liberal Democratic Party's education policy expert, who seeking an increase in the education budget citing that the ratio of Japan's education expenses to GDP is smaller than other leading countries' ratios. The Finance Ministry is seeking to check forces aiming at boosting the education budget availing themselves of the formulation of a basic education program.

Education policy experts in the Diet have demanded that the education expenses in GDP terms be raised from the current 3.5 PERCENT to 5.0 PERCENT, the average percentage of member nations of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

However, the data provided by the Finance Ministry indicate that looking at education expenses per student, the level of Japan, where the number of students are small, is almost on a par with that of five leading countries.

Concerning the ODA budget, Fiscal Policy Council Chairman Taizo Nishimura during a press conference after the meeting on May 19 said, "Given the present fiscal condition, it is not possible to say that we will increase the budget uniformly." Regarding the education budget, too, he said, "I must say that the situation does not allow for us to boost the budget."

(7) Look to Africa - ahead of TICAD: China has taken African countries' "votes for Japan" needed for its bid for permanent UNSC seat

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MAINICHI (Page 5) (Full)  
May 20, 2008

Angola, located in the southern part of Africa, has proudly sustained an annual double-digit economic growth rate thanks to its oil and diamond production. The Japan Business Federation's (Nippon Keidanren) mission visited the country's capital of Ruanda for the first time in last October. When an economic minister of the country was expressing his hopes of Japan's expanding into Angola, a Japanese diplomat who was also present in the meeting gasped in surprise to hear the minister mistaking Japan for China. This episode made the diplomat keenly realize China's growing influence in Africa.

China loaned a total of some 400 billion yen to Angola through its Export-Import Bank from 2004 through 2007. Meanwhile, Japan was asked by Angola in 2002 for economic cooperation in the form of a personal letter addressed to then Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, but Japan decided not to offer such cooperation because of its "bad fiscal situation" at the time. In establishing an embassy in that country, Japan was also behind China. It was not until 2005 when Japan opened an embassy in that country.

Around that time, Japanese diplomacy suffered a symbolic failure.

Japan failed in its bid for a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in 2005 despite the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' (MOFA) all-out efforts. Japan anticipated receiving support for its bid for a permanent UNSC seat from 53 African countries to which Japan had provided official development assistance (ODA) for many years. However, no African country was willing to join hands with Japan to co-sponsor a resolution (aimed at reforming the UNSC). Behind this failure was reportedly China's open obstruction of Japan's efforts by sending its emissaries to African countries around March of the same year and even casting doubts on Japan's reputation by circulating a booklet that referred to the Nanking Massacre.

Chinese President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao often visited Africa with the former visiting that continent in April 2006 and February 2006 and the latter in June 2006. In November 2006, China hosted the China-Africa Cooperation Forum in Beijing, which had the participation of leaders from 41 African countries. Japan's rival India, in terms of aiming for a permanent UNSC in Asia, also hosted an Africa summit in New Delhi this past April, in which leaders and cabinet members from 14 African countries took part.

These moves are not necessarily a simple contest for getting support from African countries. This past April, a Chinese cargo ship, which was trying to carry weapons into Zimbabwe, became an issue internationally. The ultimate destination of the Chinese cargo ship was Angola. Meanwhile, on May 16 Japan finally decided to offer some 4 billion yen in grant aid to Angola.

Africa has now become a major "battlefield" for international politics where the big powers in Asia are competing hard.

ASTERISK      ASTERISK      ASTERISK      ASTERISK      ASTERISK

The fourth Tokyo International Conference on African Development Mainichi Shimbun will look into behind-the-scenes stories and challenges facing Japan.

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(8) LDP has no quick fix to boost cabinet support rate

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Full)  
May 20, 2008

The ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) leadership has made it clear it will make efforts to boost the approval rate for the cabinet of Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda, which has dropped below to 20 PERCENT . However, the situation is that it is difficult to find a quick fix solution to boost the cabinet support rate. Therefore, Fukuda will be forced to continue steering his administration under difficult conditions.

The ruling parties have overcome a major hurdle of enacting a bill amending the Road Construction Revenues Special Exemption Law by resorting to an overriding vote on the bill in the House of Representatives on May 13.

On the night of May 14, Secretary General Bunmei Ibuki, Diet Affairs Committee Chairman Tadamori Oshima and Chief Cabinet Secretary Nobutaka Machimura dined together at a Japanese restaurant in Tokyo. The two LDP leaders agreed to urge the Fukuda cabinet to map out a policy of providing older people with a sense of security, working people with hope, and young people with dreams.

The LDP intends to stage a counterattack, since the Diet has now returned to normalcy after the provisional tax rates, including the gasoline tax, were reinstated.

A senior party member revealed the view that the LDP would set a goal for the time being of raising the cabinet approval rate to 25 PERCENT . Another senior member said enthusiastically: "We would like to increase it by 5 points before the Group of Eight summit in

Hokkaido."

However, the outlook is that a revision of the new medical service system for those aged 75 and over, will not be unable to boost the support rate since improving the system's operation alone will not become a positive message to the public. The prime minister's plan to free up revenues from road-related taxes for use in general expenditures is certain to encounter difficulties as a competition has already begun between ministries, which want to grab a larger share of the budget, and LDP lawmakers with ties to road construction interests, who will try to prevent such a move.

Ibuki took a position that the LDP should show the public the full picture of tax-system reform, including the consumption tax rate. It is certain that voters will sharply react to a hike in the consumption tax rate.

(9) My point of view: Lease of pandas questionable: Using wild animal as souvenir improper

ASAHI (Page 14) (Full)  
May 20, 2008

By Seiki Takatsuki, professor at Azabu University (specialized in animal ecology)

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Chinese President Hu Jintao reportedly promised to Prime Minister Fukuda during his visit to Japan in early May that China would lease a pair of pandas to Ueno Zoo in Tokyo. As a person who took part in an international project to protect pandas about 20 years ago, I question such a lease.

Coincidentally, Ling Ling, the male panda at Ueno Zoo, died at the end of April, just before Hu visited Japan. Japanese people mourned for him as if he were a popular actor. The giant panda is certainly an adorable animal but it is indisputably a wild animal. We must not forget this.

Pandas once lived in a wide range of areas covering from areas near Beijing to Himalaya. Now, however, a decreased number of pandas live only in the depths of the mountains in Sichuan province.

The number of pandas significantly decreased during the Cultural Revolution in China from the 1960s through the 1970s. During this period, forests were actively logged as population increased. As a result, bamboo, food for pandas, died off, and many pandas starved to death. When this sad news was reported, countries across the world extended assistance, and a fine facility to protection pandas was built in Sichuan province.

In celebration of the normalization of diplomatic ties between Japan and China in 1972, China presented two giant pandas, Kang Kang and Lan Lan, to Japan.

It is the Chinese government's traditional practice to bring some souvenirs when it enters into diplomatic relations or when it patches up a quarrel. Giving generous souvenirs, such as gorgeous handicraft products or food, show its sincerity. But I wonder if it is acceptable to place the wild animal panda on the same level as such luxurious goods.

Gorillas and orangutans are now in danger of extinction. The countries with areas providing habitats for these animals are carrying activities to protect them. But that is not all. Such activities have been supported by our awareness that all human beings must preserve them with concerted efforts as the earth's heritages.

The albatross in Japan was once in danger of extinction, but activities to protect the species brought about a successful result, evoking praise from other countries. If the Iriomote cat became extinct, Japan would come under fire in the international society. Protecting wild animals is now a cross-border challenge.

From the viewpoint of protecting wild animals on a global scale, leasing pandas seems out of fashion. Pandas do not belong to the Chinese government.

If pandas are brought into Japan, Japanese children will be glad to view them. But if an adult says: "Pandas are categorized as a wild animal, and their number is on the decrease. Pandas, therefore, should live in the mountains, and not at a zoo," children will surely have a correct understanding about the panda. I have no intention to throw cold water on China's kindness, but it is about time (for China) to graduate from panda diplomacy.

SCHIEFFER